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**POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND
IMPLEMENTATION BY MOA BOTSWANA**

By

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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Agriculture of Botswana is currently coordinating Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture initiatives, in line with its main policy objective of food security. As the country is faced with various challenges of rapid urbanization, declining economy, growing urban poverty and HIV/AIDS, urban agriculture has become increasingly relevant for the country. So far few studies have been carried out on urban agriculture. Mosha (2001) and Byerley (1996) indicate that urban agriculture is not employed in Botswana in a scale comparable to other developing countries. However, there are indications that urban agriculture is growing and is contributing considerably to income generation, employment creation and poverty alleviation (Hovorka 2004).

The policy interest on urban agriculture was necessitated by the following:

- Rapid urbanization. The recent Population and Housing Census Report indicate that the urban population now stands at 52% (CSO, 2001).
- Growing urban unemployment that stands at 21 % (GoB/UNDP, 2002)
- Growing urban poverty. The current national situation with respect to poverty is that about 36.6% of the population is living below the poverty datum line (UNDP, 2002). Whilst the 1997 Botswana Institute for Development and Policy Analysis Poverty report showed urban poverty to be lower than rural poverty, a recent report by UNDP on poverty indicated that urban poverty was now on the increase (ibid.)
- HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS pandemic poses a huge challenge for the nation at large. Botswana is among the Southern African Countries which are hard-hit by the HIV/AIDS pandemic with about 17% of its population infected (CSO 2002). Furthermore an estimated 35.8% incidence of HIV/AIDS in the productive age group i.e. 15-49 years has been noted by the UNDP, 2002 report. The government of Botswana approach to tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic is multi-sectoral, with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) in the forefront on issues of food security, nutrition and poverty alleviation. Within MOA is an HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit has been set up to ensure that HIV-AIDS issues are mainstreamed in the agricultural sector.

Policy development on urban agriculture

Such socio-economic and demographic trends have prompted the government to explore Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture (UPA). The idea is to come up with a Policy on UPA as it has been recognized through research and various consultative workshops that it has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of household food security, improvement in household nutrition, income generation, creation of employment, poverty alleviation, waste management and beautification and greening of cities & towns.

MOA has put together a **multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary taskforce** to push for the development and inclusion of UPA in National Development Planning processes. The policy statements that indicate commitment to UPA has already been included in the current National Development Plan. The Taskforce that comprises of various stakeholders from both central and local government, NGOs and private sector was set up in 2001, immediately after the first national workshop on UPA was held. Two more consultative workshops were held in 2003 and 2005 to consolidate issues on the development of the UPA policy. The UPA initiative has also been officially launched by the Minister of Agriculture in 2004. It was deemed necessary to launch the initiative in recognition of the fact that UPA is already in progress. It was also meant to raise awareness and show stakeholders that MOA is committed to the UPA initiative.

A draft working paper on UPA has been developed and is yet to be finalized and be considered by the Ministry of Agriculture Policy Advisory Committee.

Support at project level

The MOA is implementing certain projects which are geared at meeting the food and nutrition objectives that also takes into consideration the HIV/AIDS. These include:

- Having **demonstration gardens** in offices as a way of encouraging communities to develop backyard gardening
- Producing **booklets for vegetation production** to guide individual families and communities on how to produce vegetables
- Provision of **formal and informal training** in agricultural training centres
- **Provision of technical assistance** on production and marketing aspects of home and community gardens to individuals, families and communities, 4B-youth groups (in or out of school), women groups, clinics and home based care groups
- Building **partnerships with NGOS** and private sector on implementing urban agriculture. The Department of Crop Production and Forestry (DCPF) together with "Never Ending Gardens," a faith based organization from the USA, implement a partnership project and completed planting 6500 vegetables plots in homes of disadvantaged households in Gaborone.

LESSONS LEARNT

The experiences gained by the MOA indicate that for the successful implementation of urban agriculture policies and projects it is important that:

- Participatory approaches are applied in the planning, implementation and monitoring of these policies and projects
- Costs and benefits of urban agriculture projects should be shared by all stakeholders involved in these projects
- De-stigmatise urban agriculture projects by making them as open as possible to anyone interested in improving their nutrition. The draft Policy Paper has chosen to use this strategy in order to ensure that UPA catches on without being stigmatized and/or associated with HIV/AIDS.

We recommend these as the basic principles or essential components to be considered when coming up with such projects.

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